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## Theatre of the Oppressed: Transitioning Feminist Pedagogy from Theory to Praxis

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*Minnesota State University - Mankato*

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THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED:  
TRANSITIONING FEMINIST PEDAGOGY FROM THEORY TO PRAXIS

By  
MEGAN MARY RAE

THIS THESIS SUBMITTED  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
MASTER OF ARTS  
IN GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO

MANKATO, MINNESOTA

May 3, 2012

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Theatre of the Oppressed: Transitioning Feminist Pedagogy from Theory to Praxis

Megan Mary Rae

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the thesis committee.

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## CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	page iii
ABSTRACT.....	page iv
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES.....	page v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	page 1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	page 5
a. Pedagogy of the Oppressed.....	page 6
b. Theatre of the Oppressed.....	page 11
c. Relationship Violence.....	page 19
3. METHODOLOGY.....	page 29
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	page 33
a. Results.....	page 33
b. Discussion.....	page 50
5. CONCLUSION.....	page 57
APPENDIX 1: Audience Survey Copy.....	page 60
APPENDIX 2: Focus Group Interview Discussion Themes.....	page 61
APPENDIX 3: Focus Group Interview Color Coded Results.....	page 62
APPENDIX 4: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter.....	page 71
APPENDIX 5: “ <i>When...</i> ” Playbill.....	page 73
APPENDIX 6: Theatre of the Oppressed Vocabulary Reference Chart ....	page 74
WORKS CITED.....	page 76

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## ABSTRACT

## GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES

## THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED IN FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

RAE, MEGAN MARY, Minnesota State University – Mankato, Minnesota, 2012.

Bell hooks states in her text *Feminist Theory: From Margins to Center* that there is a “missing link” between feminist theory and praxis (113). This creates a “tug-of-war” mentality in higher education between practitioners and academics (hooks 113). Paulo Freire also challenges education structures with his critique of “the banking system” in his text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (72). In 1971, Augusto Boal created a venue of theatre founded on these educational challenges called Theatre of the Oppressed that allows for discussion, participation, and a shared experience between actors and audience members. In this research, I demonstrate the use of Theatre of the Oppressed at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) in March 2012. In order to study how this style of education contributes to feminist pedagogy, a performance titled “*When...*” was presented on the MNSU campus. The topics addressed in the production are relationship violence, consent, risk reduction, and bystander intervention. Survey and focus group interview research methods were used to gather audience members’ and actors’ responses to the production. The results display the success of “*When...*” at MNSU and explore areas for continued research with Theatre of the Oppressed and feminist pedagogy. Key theorists used in this study are Augusto Boal, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks.

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

### **Tables**

*Table 4.1.* Survey Sample Demographics

*Table 4.2.* Audience Survey Results Q#1

*Table 4.3.* Audience Survey Results Q#2

*Table 4.4.* Audience Survey Results Q#3

*Table 4.5.* Audience Survey Results Q#4

*Table 4.6.* Audience Survey Results Q#5

*Table 4.7.* Focus Group Interview Sample Demographics

*Table 4.8.* Color Coding for Focus Group Interview

### **Figures**

*Figure 2.1.* Theatre of the Oppressed Format Tree

*Figure 4.1.* Gender and Age of Survey Participants

*Figure 4.2.* Focus Group Interview Question #1 Results

*Figure 4.3.* Focus Group Interview Question #2 Results

*Figure 4.4.* Focus Group Interview Question #3 Results

*Figure 4.5.* Focus Group Interview Question #4 Results

*Figure 4.6.* Focus Group Interview Question #5 Results

## Chapter One

### Introduction

History demonstrates how theatre can be used as an educational tool by presenting situations or experiences that capture a particular culture, location, time, or message. In 1971 Brazilian director Augusto Boal questioned whether theatre could transform one's life in addition to capturing one's experience. With his text *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal answered this question by creating an audience-interactive style of performance that allows one to practice real life situations in a controlled setting. In this environment one can explore personal and social change through role play and constructing alternative endings through improvisational acting.

As the primary researcher, my personal experiences and education shape my understanding of the results presented in this thesis. I received a Bachelor of Arts in Theatre, which provided me with the foundational knowledge to begin exploring theatre as a venue of education. As a survivor of domestic abuse, I possess a marginalized voice that seeks an avenue for expression and a deep passion to raise awareness about relationship violence. My experience as a survivor has exposed me to other women and men who have been affected by relationship violence. Many of them share the same experiences as I did with the lack of support and understanding from family and friends. This directed me to Boal's methods of interactive theatre to change and challenge the societal responses to victims of violence in Mankato, Minnesota.

In 2009, I wrote a theatre performance titled "*When...*" in the format of Theatre of the Oppressed. I used this as a venue for myself and other survivors to discuss issues of relationship violence and abuse. After the success of the first production, I toured



*“When...”* to various colleges in the Midwestern United States. The success of the show motivated me to pursue a Masters of Arts degree in Gender and Women’s Studies to study other marginalized experiences and continue to use theatre as a means of understanding and activism.

My research results are based on a performance of *“When...”* that took place at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) on March 1, 2012. *“When...”* is developed in the format of Forum Theatre, a subsection of Theatre of the Oppressed, and is broken into three sections. The first section is titled “When do you speak up?” The scene demonstrates the conflicting messages presented to a victim of abuse that ultimately silence her. This scene is discussion-based only and veers slightly from the standard format of Forum Theatre.

The second scene, titled “When do you step in?” is a public display of violence between two people. The audience is challenged to explore bystander intervention techniques. The scene is replayed three times: first with two males, then with two females, and finally with a male and a female, with the female as the aggressor. The relationship between the characters changes based on audience-inspired improvisations. These can include playing the characters in a friendship or in a same-sex relationship, demonstrating various relationship dynamics. I chose to script the female in the third section as the aggressor to demonstrate that abusive relationships come in many forms. After the audience viewed the scene they participated through discussion and improvisational acting. This allowed the audience members to practice bystander intervention in a controlled environment.

The final scene is titled “When do you step in?” This scene is set at a house party and demonstrates some possible events that may precede a sexual assault. In addition to addressing bystander intervention, this scene also includes a discussion of consent, risk reduction, and society’s gendered expectations in regards to sexual desire. The scene was presented to the audience with an invitation for discussion and improvisation to adjust the events of the party in a manner that utilizes risk reduction and bystander intervention.

The production on March 1, 2012 was analyzed to demonstrate the success of Theatre of the Oppressed as an educational tool for discussing relationship violence in Mankato, Minnesota. Although the success of this research suggests that Theatre of the Oppressed can transition to several topics in feminist pedagogy, these results are specific to this performance, script, audience, location, and time. Surveys were placed in the playbills to estimate the educational impact on the audience. The audience members were asked to fill out the surveys and place them in a box outside of the auditorium after the performance. Additionally, a focus group interview was held post-production with the cast members of “*When...*” to evaluate their experience in being a part of the production process.

This research is broken into the following sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, results and discussion, and conclusion. Valuable information is also located in the appendix, including a copy of the audience survey and full focus group interview results. The literature review provides foundational knowledge and past research in the following areas: Theatre of the Oppressed, pedagogy of the oppressed, and education on relationship violence. The methodology includes my positionality as the researcher in addition to the feminist research methods I implemented to display my

results. The results and discussion section examines the findings of the survey and focus group interview, presents the positive and negative aspects of this research and explores continued research on the topic of relationship violence and Theatre of the Oppressed based on this performance.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

This chapter reviews three bodies of knowledge necessary for contextualizing this research project. I selected the first body of knowledge, pedagogy of the oppressed, because it is the foundational pedagogy that is implemented in Theatre of the Oppressed. I use the pedagogies of Paulo Freire in this section. A feminist critique of Freire's work I wish to address is his lack of analysis on gender and his sexist position in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Therefore, I have also included bell hooks' work to provide a feminist lens on Freire's work as well as to mold his pedagogy to include a marginalized voice.

The second body of knowledge I selected is Theatre of the Oppressed. This I chose because I use Forum Theatre, a method of Theatre of the Oppressed, as the format for the live production analyzed in this research. This section also includes instructional books and training manuals that I referenced during the rehearsal process. Some texts in this section do not identify as Theatre of the Oppressed, but rather categorize themselves as participatory theatre or theatre outreach programs. Because their methods align with that of Augusto Boal, I argue that their similarities in approaches and philosophy justify their inclusion in this study. Key concepts found in this section are Forum Theatre, Joker<sup>1</sup>, and spect-actor. This section demonstrates how theatre can be used as an educational tool to connect theory to praxis.

The final body of knowledge is relationship violence. Although Theatre of the Oppressed can address any topic, this research uses the topic of relationship violence

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<sup>1</sup>"Joker" is capitalized to follow the formatting provided by Augusto Boal in his text *Rainbow of Desire*.

because it is the theme of the analyzed performance. Other terms that can be used in place of relationship violence are domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, or intimate partner violence (IPV). I will be using relationship violence because it encompasses the various types of interpersonal relationships throughout the performance. These include marriages, dating, same-sex and heterosexual relationships, and friendship. This section presents past research on how education on topics such as relationship violence, bystander intervention, and rape myths initiates a change in attitude towards relationship violence and motivating action.

### **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**

Bell hooks' desire to explore the "missing link" in education requires an analysis of power in higher education settings (hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margins to Center* 113). The "missing link" is the connection between theory and praxis, resulting in disconnect between education and activism. In order to fully understand the challenges in feminist pedagogy, I begin with scholar Paulo Freire, who began the critique of higher education and its lack of inclusion of personal experience. Freire's 1970 work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, addresses how the oppressed can use their personal experiences to produce knowledge. When knowledge includes individual experiences, marginalized identities are brought to the foreground and analyzed. This process allows oppressed communities to recognize their oppression and begin to create change. Freire states that there are two distinct phases to the creation of social change. This first is for the oppressed to "commit themselves" to be actively involved in the change (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 54). The second stage begins once the oppression has ended

and the process no longer becomes a pedagogy of the oppressed, but one that applies to all, creating “permanent liberation” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 54). In both phases the end result is action that creates an opportunity to fill the gap in feminist pedagogy addressed by bell hooks.

The lack of dialogue in higher education hinders the destruction of the oppressor and oppressed in academia. Freire has famously coined the term “the banking system” as a demonstration of this idea (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 72). The banking system states that there is a source of knowledge production that gives that knowledge to someone. The person who receives the knowledge is not allowed to contribute in the production process. In an educational setting, the creator of knowledge is the teacher. Students are expected to absorb, process, and regurgitate the information without allowing their personal experiences to influence it. In other words, the teaching format revolves around making deposits to a bank (students) only to be withdrawn later (exams). When only one person is creating knowledge for a group as a whole, personal experiences are excluded and the reality of oppression stays silent.

Freire’s lack of analysis on gender and use of sexist language is extremely problematic in feminist pedagogy. Presenting an oppressed male perspective encompasses only a fraction of marginalized communities. Using only male pronouns silences those who do not identify with the male gender. In response to these critiques, Freire published *Pedagogy of Hope* in 1992. The first few chapters provide a background of Freire’s experiences writing this text. Freire revisits the need for all educators to continue to have hope for political change. He states, “One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis, is to unveil opportunities of hope,

no matter what the obstacles may be” (Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* 3). Freire uses the term “fabric” to describe how outside circumstances, such as social and political problems, positions, or feelings, affect how one perceives a situation (*Pedagogy of Hope* 4). For example, universal health care systems and reproductive rights debates affect someone in poverty and someone in upper class very differently. In feminist pedagogy, Freire’s understanding of fabric is comparable to Kimberlé Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1243). Intersectionality states that one’s overlapping identity categories such as race, gender, class, and ability impact one’s systematic social inequality.

Freire continues by drawing the reader’s attention to the issues that arise with gendered language: “How can one explain, except on an ideological basis, the rule according to which, in a room filled with dozens of women and only one man, I have to say ‘Eles todos são trabalhadores e dedicados’ (‘You are all workers, and dedicated ones’), with all the variable terminations in the masculine gender?” (*Pedagogy of Hope* 55). When he used the word men, Freire intended to use men as an encompassing term for everyone, including women. He concludes by saying that it is not a “grammatical problem but an ideological one” (Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope* 55). Although Freire thanks the women who brought this error to his attention, he still does not include any political or social analysis that comes from a woman’s perspective. In order to sufficiently fill this void, I turn to feminist educator bell hooks.

The first text I use from bell hooks continues an exploration of using personal experience as a form of education. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, bell hooks continues Paulo Freire’s work, emphasizing that “education is a

practice of freedom” (13). Hooks identifies with Freire’s banking system critique, stating, “When I first began college, Freire’s thought gave me the support I needed to challenge the ‘banking system’ of education, that approach to learning that is rooted in the notion that all students need to do is consume information fed to them by a professor and be able to memorize and store it” (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 14). In order for education to be a practice of freedom, one must partake in engaged pedagogy. Hooks states that engaged pedagogy “necessarily values student expression” (*Teaching to Transgress* 20). It is the valuing of expression that is needed to reshape the hierarchies of knowledge in academia. Lived experiences cannot be valued as a position of knowledge within the traditional banking system as it only utilizes one source of knowledge production.

Chapter four of hooks’ text, *Teaching to Transgress*, is a “playful” conversation between Gloria Watkins, bell hooks’ legal name, and herself as bell hooks, her writing alias (45). Hooks speaks about her connection with Freire and how his pedagogy helped her navigate issues such as racism, sexism, and class exploitation. She states that “Paulo was one of the thinkers whose work gave me a language” (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 46). Hooks also employs this chapter to address the sexism found in Freire’s work stating, “I never wish to see this critique of this blind spot overshadow anyone’s (and feminists’ in particular) capacity to learn from the insights” (hooks, *Teaching to Transgress* 49). She explains that it is her feminist thinking that has given her the insight and opportunity to explore Freire’s work with a balance of appreciation and criticism. I intend to use my education in feminist pedagogy to use the methods of both Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal while examining them under a feminist lens, understanding the



limitations of their original texts' sexist position yet appreciating the educational format that has been created.

Maurianne Adam's article "Pedagogical Frameworks for Social Justice" found in *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* responds to Freire's pedagogy and social change. Adams states that, "The purpose of Freire's pedagogy is to enable the oppressed to understand that oppressive forces are not part of the natural order of things, but rather the result of historical and socially constructed human forces that can be changed by humans" (30). She places Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* under the umbrella of "liberatory pedagogy" (Adams 31). Pedagogy of the Oppressed focuses on bringing the voices of the "targeted participants" to the foreground while also "empowering the facilitator to use facilitator-status authority on behalf of the 'truth claims' of these marginalized experiences" (Adams 31). Specific to Freirean pedagogy, the facilitator's role is to prompt discussion, thus creating a structure that includes marginalized voices.

Nancy A. Naples is one of many who used experiential learning in women's studies. In *Teaching Feminist Activism: Strategies from the field*, Naples' chapter, "The Dynamics of Critical Pedagogy, Experiential Learning and Women's Studies" calls on several scholars' work in critical pedagogy, including Freire and hooks. Naples begins with John Dewey, who believed that "self-reflexivity was an essential component of the learning process" (Naples 10). Dewey argues that in order to be self-reflective one must learn from experience, whether it be theirs or others'. This can be achieved by allowing students to share their experiences in the educational setting. Second, Naples utilizes hooks to illustrate the feminist contribution to education that brought women's personal experiences into educational curriculum. Naples notes, "Early women's studies classes

used journal writings, autobiographical essays, and oral histories of family and community members among other techniques to provide students with the opportunity to explore how their personal is political”(10). Berenice Fischer, a philosopher of education, points out that consciousness-raising (CR) techniques inside or outside of education can often result “in the development of strong and deep bonds among women that could support activism” (Naples 10). Lisa Hogeland supports this idea, arguing that “while personal experiences served as the beginning for feminist analysis, CR groups were to switch their energies to political projects such as abortion rights, expansion of child care services, employment and education equity, and fight violence against women” (Naples 11). Although CR did work, once women’s studies grew in higher education, women were being pulled between activist organizations and academia.

### **Theatre of the Oppressed**

The previous section identified a need to address the system of knowledge exchange in higher education and the “missing link” between theory, praxis, and action (hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margins to Center* 113). This section posits that Theatre of the Oppressed can be used to fill the gap that this missing link creates. Appendix 6 provides a chart from the glossary of Frances Babbage’s work, *Augusto Boal*, addressed in more detail later in this section. This chart is included to provide basic concepts, vocabulary, and people that are addressed within this section in a format that can be easily accessible for those unfamiliar with theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed vocabulary.

I begin this section with Augusto Boal, who transitioned Paulo Freire's banking system into a theatrical convention between audience and actor (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 72). Augusto Boal's text, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, argues that theatre is political because of its representation and influence on society. Boal states, "[Art] is considered to present always a vision of the world in transformation and therefore is inevitably political insofar as it shows the means of carrying out that transformation or of delaying it" (Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* 1). Though he questions the purpose of art and science, he concludes that it is "to correct the faults of nature, by using the suggestions of nature itself" (Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* 9). Boal asserts that Aristotle's tragedy imitates human behavior and analyzes how Greek drama's use of tragedy impacts society as a whole (Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* 12). This is achieved by the demonstration of possible moral choices through characters in a script.

This text continues encompassing concepts of happiness, virtue, justice, and conflict. Boal finds that happiness is derived from material pleasure, glory, and virtue (*Theatre of the Oppressed* 14). Virtue is found in choices that we make that benefit both the soul and the body. It is also something learned rather than an innate skill. Aristotle further states that the formation of habits should begin in childhood and that "youth cannot practice politics because he needs to first learn all the virtuous habits taught by his elders, the legislators who instruct the citizens in virtuous habits" (Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* 16). Boal argues that Greek tragedy is the means to measure life's moral dilemmas. This is Boal's first text regarding Theatre of the Oppressed and is the least accessible to a wide audience. It is based in philosophy and theatre history, providing more of a conceptual argument rather than an applicable educational tool.

Frances Babbage provides a more accessible text on the development and history of Theatre of the Oppressed in *Augusto Boal*. Babbage states, “Directly and indirectly, his [Boal’s] practice has entered contexts as diverse as political protest, education, therapy, prison, health, management and local government, as well as infiltrating the mainstream theatre establishment” (Babbage 1). During the development of Theatre of the Oppressed, Brazil was a place of economic chaos that created an immense class divide. During the 1950s and 1960s Brazil’s economic pressure and instability grew because of the “ambitious plans for industrial development, support of large foreign loans, and sinking coffee prices” (Babbage 3). The communities that felt the economic pressures to produce products fell deeper in poverty and began to strike and riot. This environment allowed Boal to see drastic differences in social class and begin to explore liberation through theatre.

Boal’s education in theatre relocated him to New York, exposing him to his primary influences: Bertolt Brecht and Konstantin Stanislavsky (Babbage 6). Theatre of the Oppressed often references Brecht’s development of Epic Theatre that focuses on social problems. Babbage comments, “Brecht’s political themes and anti-illusionist, ‘critical’ production style have found renewed expression in Boal’s practice” (Babbage 6). In 1955, Boal returned to Brazil to work as a director of the Arena Theatre applying the Stanislavsky Method of acting. Stanislavsky’s Method is an acting technique that trains actors to use their emotional memory to create authentic reactions during a performance (Babbage 6). Boal used his directing to produce theatre about and for the oppressed. As the economic upset grew in Brazil so did the censorship of theatre, which ultimately ended with Boal’s exile in 1971.

During his exile, Boal developed the principle ideas of Theatre of the Oppressed. Boal created multiple formats in responses to particular situations. These formats include simultaneous dramaturgy, image theatre, forum theatre, invisible theatre, and newspaper theatre.

Once the regime fell in 1979, Boal

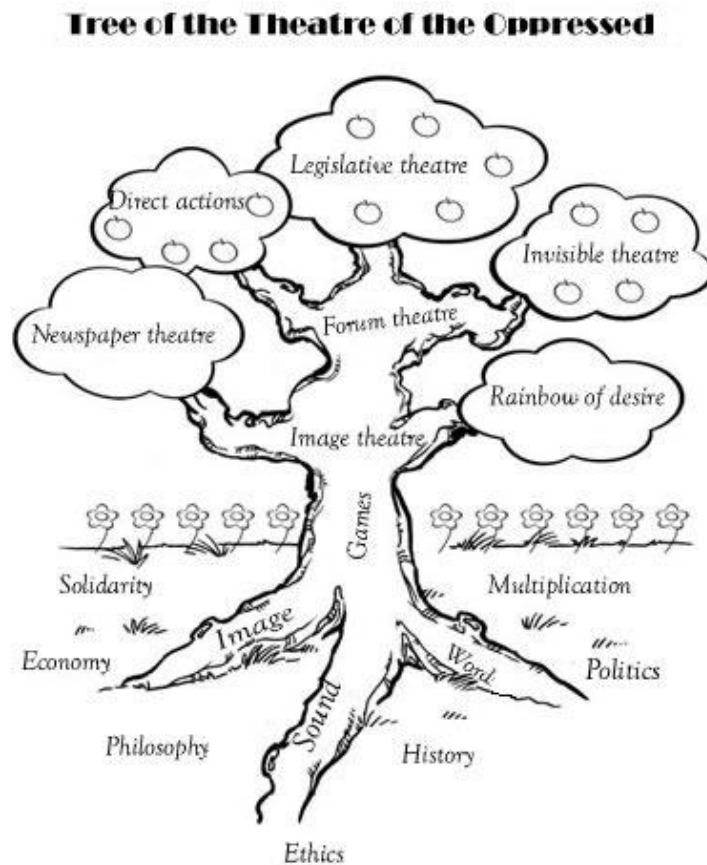


Figure 2.1. Theatre of the Oppressed Format Tree

returned to Brazil. His methods were already being widely practiced. Forum Theatre is the most popular method of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (Babbage 21). In this format, Boal breaks down the hierarchy of knowledge by giving the audience an interactive role in the performance. The first step of this process is a "play" or "anti-model" performed by actors to the audience members (Babbage 22). The initial demonstration of the scene goes incorrectly or presents a negative result to the social problem being addressed. The scene establishes a clear protagonist and antagonist. The audience is invited to view and discuss the scene by the Joker (Babbage 32). The Joker's function is to invite discussion and assist the audience with the transition from spectator

to spect-actor by addressing the audience and facilitating dialogue. A spect-actor is an audience member who has entered the playing field and become part of the performance through discussion or acting (Babbage 44). Boal breaks the banking system of education by encouraging the audience to become active players rather than passive members of knowledge exchange. The second showing of the scene continues in its original format until it is stopped by a spect-actor who takes the place of the protagonist and changes the action or plot to create an alternative ending. This process is replayed as many times as needed until a realistic resolution is found that will solve the original conflict.

During the performance of “*When...*”, I play the role of the Joker. Thus I examine Chris Wine’s article, which provides a closer look at the Joker positions, in the text, *Learning Through Theatre: New Perspectives on Theatre and Education*. Vine’s chapter “[Theatre in Education] TIE and the Theatre of the Oppressed” studies the Greenwich Young People’s Theatre (GYPT) in 1982. GYPT was the first British company to incorporate Boal’s methods into education (Vine 109). GYPT worked to:

develop a dialectical and materialist practice through which its audiences could be actively engaged as the subjects in the learning process (as opposed to passive objects who are filled with knowledge by and from others) but simultaneously be challenged to take a critically objective view of their experience, recognizing themselves as part of the social reality from which the contents of the TIE programs were drawn. (Vine 110)

Through GYPT’s experiment with Boal’s Forum Theatre they developed the role of the Joker more explicitly. Vine states that the Joker is “the direct link between the audience and the dramatic action” (116). Vine touches on the challenges this position faces:

The Joker has to judge when to move from one line of enquiry to another, when to stop pursuing one action and its consequences and allow someone else to open up a new possibility: she must keep the audience focused on the central problems, select the appropriate questions to further the dramatic debate, support the spectators and the actors, challenge the spectators, know when to listen, when to speak and when to insist on action. (118)

Most importantly, the Joker must encompass all these roles without imposing her or his opinions on the audience members.

Shauna Butterwick's article, "Re/searching Speaking and Listening Across Difference: Exploring Feminist Coalition Politics through Participatory Theatre," reviews and evaluates her experience working with theatre in regards to coalition building across racial differences. Butterwick's project was named Transforming Dangerous Spaces (TDS) and involved three key steps (453). The first was the recruitment of women to participate in a theatre production, the second was an intensive acting workshop, and the third was the performance of an interactive play for the community. A scene addressing racial differences in coalition building was presented to an audience and they were "invited to think about what they observed and to intervene" (Butterwick 456). According to this definition, Butterwick used Boal's methods from Forum Theatre to facilitate her project.

Augusto Boal describes Forum Theatre as the following:

Forum Theatre presents a scene or a play that must necessarily show a situation of oppression that the Protagonist does not know how to fight

against, and fails. The *spect-actors* are invited to replace the Protagonist, and act out-on stage and not from the audience-all possible solutions, ideas, and strategies. (Boal, [www.theatreoftheoppressed.org](http://www.theatreoftheoppressed.org))

Butterwick describes popular theatre as “a process of theatre which deeply involves specific communities in identifying issues of concern, analyzing current conditions and causes of a situation, identifying points of change, and analyzing how change could happen and/or contributing to the actions implied” (451). A difference between Butterwick and Boal is their educational background. One definition uses vocabulary from a theatrical background while the other uses vocabulary from an activist background. This research will strengthen the connection between the educational qualities and the vocabulary of Theatre of the Oppressed.

In Ann Elizabeth Armstrong’s and Kathleen Juhl’s book, *Radical Acts: Theatre and Feminist Pedagogies of Change* they state, “conscious of how power relations inform and shape the classroom, feminist pedagogies in theatre construct communities where knowledge emerges through our encounters, and especially through our confrontations, with one another” (7). *Radical Acts* brings together the work of feminist professors, teachers, activists, and artists, acknowledging a wide variety of feminist expression as part of an important network where participants sustain and support each other. “*When...*” can be considered one of these networks because it brings together a group of people to discuss an issue that affects the target population.

Both Armstrong and Juhl understand the natural connection between feminist pedagogy and theatre: “Both feminism and theatre offer methods for speaking through and across differences, and as an artistic medium, theatre requires that we enter into an



honest and authentic representation of conflict” (8). They further suggest that feminist teachings expressed through theatre offer a way to “bridge the widening gap between the ivory tower and our broader communities” (Armstrong and Juhl 8). I argue that this widening gap is closely connected to the missing link bell hooks recognizes in feminist pedagogy (hooks 113).

*Theatre for Community, Conflict & Dialogue: The Hope Is Vital Training Manual* by Michael Rohd was written as a training manual for The Hope Is Vital interactive theatre program. This text is included as an instructional book that provides step by step information on the phases of interactive theatre and the particular aspects of facilitating a performance. This program was founded on Freire’s idea that education should be a dialogue. Hope Is Vital desires to:

Create safe spaces, to have dialogue, to explore choices and the consequences that they bring, to practice for real life, to enhance their skills of communication and decision making, to understand how self-esteem affects moments of decisions, to take risks in fictional worlds with the potential to learn rather than fail, to take action and to be the protagonist in one’s own life, to critically and viscerally analyze life situations and one’s own responses, and to utilize the multiple perspectives different individuals bring to every interaction as a positive tool for problem solving. (Paterson xviii)

Like Butterwick’s work, Rohd’s text uses Forum Theatre but does not apply the language of Theatre of the Oppressed. Rohd’s manual is set up similarly to Boal’s *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* and includes improvisational games, trust-building techniques,

acting techniques, and facilitation guides, all of which are common to Boal. Rohd lists the qualities of a good facilitator as “energetic and enthusiastic, good listener, non-judgmental, deepens the discussion and moves the facilitation forward, confident in role as a tone-setter and guide, is aware of the dynamics in the room, understands that some people don’t want to be there, and asks every question truly wanting an answer” (Rohd 115). This matches Boal’s concept of a successful Joker. Additionally, Rohd provides instructions on how to display the original play, focus the discussion, and guide the spect-actors through the improvisations.

The final text I use for this body of knowledge is *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* by Augusto Boal. It contains brief historical summaries on the different formats of Theatre of the Oppressed and a large index of improvisation games, staging ideas, methods of rehearsal, and rules of the game. Because the rules of Forum Theatre are addressed throughout this chapter, dissecting this text in depth would be repetitive. However, I strongly recommend this text for anyone interested in implementing their own Forum Theatre program.

This section establishes the structure of Forum Theatre, the role of the Joker, actor, and spect-actor, and successful educational programs that have utilized Boal’s methods. This foundational knowledge and past program documentation with Theatre of the Oppressed assisted in forming the structure of the analyzed performance and methods used in this research.

## **Relationship Violence**

Augusto Boal articulates that in order for Forum Theatre to be successful, the topic must address something relevant to that particular community that requires a transition from theory to activism. “*When...*” abides by these rules by presenting the topic of relationship violence to a college community. With one in four women being sexually assaulted in college, relationship violence is a topic that can resonate with nearly everyone (rainn.org). Many universities, MNSU included, host events such as The Clothesline Project and Take Back the Night in response to the high risk of assault on young women. That these two events continue to be common in U.S. colleges suggests two things: there is a desire and need for education about sexual assault on college campus and women are still being assaulted. These programs are important because they bring to light the reality of sexual assaults, but they do not provide a method of action beyond allowing victims to break their silence. Theatre of the Oppressed can be used as an additional tool to transition personal experience into activism.

Past research states that 13 to 42 percent of college students experience relationship violence either as the victim or perpetrator (Miller 1). Laura Miller states that many students do not identify with being in an abusive relationship and therefore cannot use the tools needed to begin to heal: She expands on this problem:

[Not identifying with an abusive relationship] may lead individuals to perpetuate the perpetrations and/or receipt of abuse in current relationships, to ignore warning signs that more severe abuse may be developing, to perpetuate abuse in subsequent relationships, and to neglect getting help needed to escape an abusive relationship. (Miller 1)

Miller argues that the first step in assisting a victim of abuse to seek supportive services is to educate people on what relationship violence actually is and how to identify it. The research presented in this project demonstrates that “*When...*” used Theatre of the Oppressed to educate the audience and actors on relationship violence.

Miller presented a study at a college in Pennsylvania that used 1,530 students across 97 different undergraduate general education courses. Her results are found in her article “Physical Abuse in a College Setting: A Study of Perceptions and Participation in Abusive Dating Relationships” published in 2011. In her study she presented surveys to students that questioned their current or most recent romantic relationship. She questions, “In your most recent/current dating relationship do you believe that you have ever been physically abused?” and “In any other past dating relationships, do you believe that you have ever been physically abused your partner?” (Miller 3) In addition to open-ended questions, Miller asked students to rate conflicts in their relationship as violent or non-violent on a Likert scale system. The Likert scale uses “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” or numbers that represent such answers. The students who identified two or more abusive situations in one relationship that would be considered abusive were placed in a category as either the victim or the perpetrator.

The results show that most students saw violence as “not normal, effective, appropriate, acceptable, or necessary” (Miller 4). Men ranked 2.7 times higher in believing that abuse could be an effective conflict resolution method in a relationship. The survey results also showed that 24.8 percent of participants were categorized as victims of abuse and 24.5 percent as perpetrators of abuse. Within the victim category, 25.0 percent of the participants identified as male with 24.6 percent as female. In the

perpetrator category, 17.0 percent identified as male with 30.4 percent as female. Miller comments:

While these findings may appear as being somewhat puzzling, previous research suggests that some females feel less powerful and more dependent in their relationships than their male counterpart and may therefore perpetrate physical violent acts as a means of self-defense, to engage their partner's attention, or as a reaction to their partner's violent behavior. (Miller 6)

Miller's study demonstrates that relationship violence is still a common problem in a college setting. According to the Likert scale system that Miller used to identify who was in an abusive relationship, one fourth of the students who participated were currently involved or had been involved in an abusive relationship. Of that one fourth, over 85 percent did not self-identify as such, 4 percent identified as having experienced an abusive relationship; the remainder was unsure (Miller 7).

Pascal Mallet and Dominique Herbé tested whether there is a connection between the level of knowledge a young adult has on sexuality and their rape-supportive beliefs. In their article "Does Knowledge about Sexuality Prevent Adolescents from Developing Rape-Supportive Beliefs?," Mallet and Herbé tested 248 adolescents around the age of 14 on their sexual knowledge to see if there was any connection between sexual education and rape perceptions. This was the first known record of a test that evaluated knowledge on sexuality rather than sexual contraception or sexually transmitted diseases (Herbé and Mallet 2). According to Herbé and Mallet, "One of the reasons some boys force sex on girls might lie in boys' and girls' beliefs regarding the extent to which it is acceptable for

boys to force sex on girls in certain situations” (2). Mallet and Herbé discuss the messages that Midwestern American youth receive about sex through television and internet that continue to perpetuate the idea that men are driven only by sexual urges and that forceful, unwanted sex is normal (Herbé and Mallet 3). The survey created for this study was “intended to assess knowledge that is theoretically relevant to behavioral adjustment to the physical and social requirements related to sexuality in middle adolescence” (Herbé and Mallet 3). The test was broken down into six sections: (a) puberty, (b) biological reproduction, (c) sexual functions and organs, (d) sexually transmitted diseases and contraception, (e) legal rights and duties, and (f) sexual pleasures (Herbé and Mallet 4). Two tests were distributed to the survey sample six months apart. Mallet and Herbé hypothesized that the boys would hold more rape-supportive beliefs than the girls and that the rape-supportive beliefs would diminish in the second testing as a result of sexual education.

Mallet and Herbé presented ten hypothetical situations that questioned the concept of sexual assault and consent. The tests showed that gender had no significant influence on rape perception (Herbé and Mallet 7). There was a decrease in rape-supportive beliefs between the first and the second test suggesting that “the average decreasing tendency of rape-supportive beliefs can be viewed as a consequence of sex education during the school year” (Herbé and Mallet 7). Mallet and Herbé concluded that an increase in sexual education lowered the rape-supportive beliefs in these students, “Teaching adolescents sexual knowledge is likely to make them more receptive to prevention programs that focus on their attitudes and aim to change them” (7). The use of vocabulary is problematic in this study. The survey presented sexual situations that considered when it

is acceptable for a boy to force sex onto a girl. Each situation was presented in a heterosexual context and implied that there are situations where forced sex is acceptable. The phrasing of the survey asked girls to evaluate which assault would be worse than others. Although sexual education was provided, which could dispel any rape-supportive beliefs, I argue the initial questions led the participants to negotiate with assault rather than understand that it is never acceptable.

Sarah McMahon creates a strong connection between rape reduction and bystander intervention techniques in “Rape Myth Beliefs and Bystander Attitudes Among Incoming College Students.” McMahon studied the “shift in the field of rape prevention from a focus on victims and perpetrators to the role of the community members, and suggests that individuals in the community can intervene when faced with situations involving sexual violence” (1). She asserts that bystander intervention is the optimal tool in college environments because most assaults involve someone that the victim knows, and most are initiated in social settings (McMahon 1). McMahon prepared a study that investigates when bystanders would intervene in a sexually abusive situation.

The definition of the rape myth has changed overtime. It was originally used to describe prejudice of someone who was raped or a rapist. It transitioned to a set of false beliefs that are socially perpetuated around rape and justify sexual aggression against women (McMahon 2). McMahon tested 951 undergraduate students focusing on the following themes: “She asked for it,” “it wasn’t really rape,” “he didn’t mean to,” “she lied,” and “alcohol” (McMahon 3). McMahon found that the concepts around rape myths have changed: “Although those rape myths that blatantly blame girls and women for rape have become less acceptable, many of the underlying beliefs that the girls and women did

something to contribute to the assault and that it is not completely the perpetrators fault still exist but in more covert expressions” (McMahon 3).

In order to identify which rape myths impact a student’s willingness to intervene, McMahon presented a survey to first year students at a northeastern public university prior to a rape prevention training program. Of the 2,500 surveys, 2,338 were able to be applied to her research. These surveys showed that students entering into college today see myths such as “he didn’t mean to” and “she lied” as reasons why the perpetrator should not be held responsible for a sexual assault (McMahon 8). Most students responded positively to taking action in situations where they are directly involved in a sexual assault. However, if they were a bystander or observer of the event they would probably not intervene. They also tested positively to intervening in situations that were blatantly abusive, such as assaulting a woman who is asleep or passed out. The lowest scores were in issues such as language and attitudes presented by friends and family about rape and rape myths. These results suggest that students who believe rape myths are negatively affected in regards to whether or not they will intervene in situations that align with rape myths (McMahon 8). McMahon comments, “This is an important finding because it supports the need for education about rape myths to accompany bystander intervention” (8).

Jo Bell and Nicky Stanley present another study of 85 eighth grade students in the United Kingdom about domestic abuse. They present their results in their article “Learning about Domestic Violence: Young People’s Responses to a Healthy Relationship Programme”. The program was called the Healthy Relationships Programme and was piloted in a school that was located in an inner-city that was well-



known for high levels of poverty. The program's goal was to help children identify relationship violence so that they could recognize it in their own lives and make different, healthier relationship choices (Bell and Stanley 3). This program was funded by The Domestic Violence Project in the United Kingdom and used a local theatre company with experience in theatre-in-education to script a production about domestic abuse. The plot revolves around a 12 year old boy who witnesses and experiences domestic abuse.

The issues in the performance and follow-up workshops were chosen to reflect the Personal Health and Social Education requirements of the National Curriculum, which emphasizes young people's need to develop social skills, awareness, self-esteem, and motivation. The programme also followed the guidelines detailed in the *National Healthy Schools Standard Guidance* document (Department of Education and Employment, 1999), reflecting on themes of safety and sex and relationship education. (Bell and Stanley 3)

The themes presented during the post-performance workshops were self-esteem, self-image and respect, cultural influences on femininity and masculinity, and gender roles in relationships (Bell and Stanley 3).

A survey was given to the students one week prior to the performance. The survey contained open-ended questions about domestic abuse to assess the student's original knowledge on the topic. A second survey was given post performance, after the workshop in order to view the immediate results of the program. A third survey was administered to the same students one year later to evaluate how long the students

retained the information. Additionally, small focus groups were created (13 students-six girls and seven boys) to discuss these issues in depth (Bell and Stanley 4).

The results showed that only 27 percent of students viewed domestic abuse as something that happened inside the family structure prior to the performance (Bell and Stanley 5). The survey given post-performance showed that 51 percent of students saw domestic violence as something that happened inside the home, totaling a 24 percent increase (Bell and Stanley 5). Additionally, the first survey showed that 28 percent of students felt that domestic abuse was not something that affected them directly. This percentage dropped to 15 percent after the performance (Bell and Stanley 5). The percentage of students that thought that domestic abuse can only occur with a male perpetrator and a female victim grew from 38 to 46 percent (Bell and Stanley 5). The portion of answers that related to “don’t know” or were left unanswered also increased post-performance, showing that the confusion between who can be abused and who can be an abuser became more confusing. I argue that the results would be different if the performance had featured a female abuser rather than a male abuser.

The percentage of students who would speak out about witnessing domestic violence increased drastically. The portion of students who said they would talk to their grandparents doubled and those who said they would talk to another family member quadrupled (Bell and Stanley 7). The final evaluation of this program “provided clear evidence that pupils had developed their understanding of domestic violence to view it as violence located in the family; this increased awareness was sustained overtime” (Bell and Stanley 11). Without the foundational knowledge or the ability for young adults to

talk about domestic abuse, many would not have known when or how to intervene or seek help.

This section is provided to acknowledge the need for education on relationship violence in higher education. It also presents past successful studies showing how sex-education can dispel rape myths and help one identify if one is in an abusive relationship or not. These results are pertinent to this research because they support my selection of using relationship violence as my applicable topic for the MNSU performance.

## **Conclusion**

This literature review has examined previous research in regards to pedagogy of the oppressed, Theatre of the Oppressed, and education on relationship violence. It provides the research needed for using theatre as an educational program about relationship violence. Both Paulo Freire and bell hooks comment on the discord in higher education teaching strategies. Augusto Boal's creation of Theatre of the Oppressed connects theory and praxis with Forum Theatre, challenging the hierarchies in power structures. In addition, relationship violence has continued to be a dangerous epidemic on college campuses. Educational programs are successful in creating awareness and provoking action from survivors and community members. Although I am using theories from both feminist scholars and those who do not identify as such, I will be using a feminist lens to focus my findings and research methods. I use this literature to support my findings from the performance at MNSU evaluated for this research.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

The literature provided for this research establishes a need for continued exploration in alternative forms of education. Past studies prove that educating young adults on relationship violence has a positive effect on changing societal norms about rape myths, bystander intervention strategies, and domestic abuse. Work in educational theatre, such as Augusto Boal and Theatre of the Oppressed, should not go unrecognized as a positive educational format. Theatre of the Oppressed provides a venue for open discussion, critical thinking, and knowledge application through improvisational acting by actors and spect-actors. This element allows for the audience members to apply the knowledge learned throughout the performance into action. Applying feminist theories into this formula creates an educational program that is based on the voice of the marginalized and encourages one to move beliefs to action. In this research, the marginalized voices are identified as victims and survivors of relationship violence.

As the facilitator of this study and the Joker of the researched performance, I situate myself inside the knowledge exposing the bias, privileges, and marginalized identities that frame my understanding. As a white woman who was raised in a middle-class, nuclear family, I acknowledge that my view on class and racial oppression is limited. Additionally, I was raised and studied in the Midwestern United States and identify as a bisexual woman. I can relate my personal experiences to portions of the performance discussion because I am a survivor of domestic abuse. However, I understand where my limitations lie and use audience discussion to create an equal exchange of knowledge between myself, the actors, and the audience.

I use qualitative research methods concentrated under a feminist lens. My specific methods are focus group interview (Leavy 172) and paper-and-pencil surveys (Jayaratne and Miner-Rubino 306). Both of these methods were applied to the live performance of “*When...*”. My focus group sample was pulled from the actors in the production. During this first meeting with the participants I provided a brief background of Theatre of the Oppressed as well as the research that would be conducted from the performance. The rehearsal process took approximately five two-and-a-half-hour rehearsals where we used improvisational activities from *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* and the acting method of Konstantin Stanislavski. I invited each actor to keep a journal to reflect on the positive and negative experiences of the rehearsal process because of the sensitive topic of the show. These journals were for the actors’ exploration, healing, and activist growth and are not included in this research as they neither support nor disprove the results. The actors who were cast in the performance committed to perform in front of a live audience understanding that the results from the performance would be included in this project. These actors were invited but not obligated to attend the focus group interview post-production. The performance was advertised throughout the university through posters two weeks prior to the performance date.

I selected focus group interview as a method because it can “yield descriptive data and be used to generate theory” (Leavy 172). Using this method allowed me to gain information that included “attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences, from a range of respondents at once” (Leavy 172). The focus group took place immediately following the performance on March 1, 2012. The results were notated by myself and then reviewed by each member of the focus group to allow them an opportunity to add

any additional information or to exclude information that was brought up during the interview. The question themes were the experience that the students had as performers in a Theatre of the Oppressed production, as well as whether they felt Theatre of the Oppressed could be used as an educational tool.

I also selected pen-and-paper surveys so I could evaluate the effect the performance had on the audience. Using this format allowed me to include audience members who were actively engaged but chose not to verbally participate. This method offered the audience members anonymity and an opportunity to disengage from the research portion by choosing not to turn in their surveys. In addition, pen-and-paper surveys also “create an important advantage for feminist researchers because research participants may feel more comfortable with the research situation and give voice to their true opinions or experiences when in private” (Jayaratne and Miner-Rubino 308). I kept the surveys confidential by providing a collection box outside of the theater rather than a hand collection. Open-ended questions evaluated how the audience responded to the performance based on what new information was presented to them, what they found to be the most impactful, how they would change the production in the future, and if they would recommend this performance to someone else.

Every live performance reacts differently depending on the demographic of the audience, the time of the performance, and the geographic location. This performance took place in Mankato, Minnesota in 2012. Mankato is a part of Blue Earth County with a reported population of 39,309 people from the 2010 census. This makes Mankato the fourth largest city in Minnesota outside of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul area. This performance also took place on the MNSU campus making its target audience members

of the MNSU community. It is important to remember that this research is only able to reach the scope of one performance. In including the past research in the literature review that also supports theatre as a means for education; I argue that this performance contributes as one of many that have successfully combined Theatre of the Oppressed and feminist pedagogy. The following section will include the results from my research methods as well as areas where this research can continue to expand.

## Chapter Four

### Results and Discussion

#### Results

On March 1, 2012 the house opened for the performance of *“When...”* at 7 PM. Pre-show music containing only female artists played for 30 minutes prior to the performance and paused every 90 seconds to demonstrate the frequency of violence against women in the United States (rainn.org). As the audience members arrived they were informed that an optional survey was placed in the playbill. The show began at 7:30 PM with an audience of approximately 25 members. As the Joker, I welcomed the group to the performance, explained the process of Forum Theatre, and had the actors introduce themselves to the audience in order to establish rapport.

The first scene was approximately 12 minutes long and allowed for 15 minutes of discussion. As previously stated, the scene addressed how society responds to a victim of domestic abuse. The scene displayed the confusing messages a victim receives from friends and family while navigating through an abusive relationship. Some of these messages include encouraging the victim to stay committed to the marriage or calling the victim an idiot for not leaving the relationship. Neither of these messages allows the victim to make their own choice in the process of leaving the abusive relationship. The audience discussed the situation that was presented to them and found that the best solution to support a victim of abuse is to listen and remain nonjudgmental.

The second scene presented a public display of violence. This scene encouraged the audience members to participate by joining the aesthetic space and transitioning from spectators to spect-actors. The first section was performed by two men, the second by two



women, and the final between a man and a woman with the woman as the aggressor. The audience was challenged to place themselves in the situation and explore bystander intervention tactics to dissolve the aggression. During the discussion portion, the audience found several solutions that are appropriate for a bystander intervention. However, they struggled with wanting to intervene and opted to call the police even if a safe intervention opportunity presented itself. After some exploration, the intervention tactics they found included distracting those involved in the violent situation, separating the two parties in the argument in order to address them individually, or inviting the abusive member to join them in a game of some sort. Additionally, the discussion portion also challenged the audience to explore how the situation changes when the sex of the aggressor changes or when the relationships change from friendships to romantic relationships. The audience members felt that it was easier to intervene in a situation where the aggressors were in a friendship rather than a romantic relationship because those who are in a romantic relationship are more emotionally invested in the conflict. The audience asserted that it was more difficult to put themselves into a domestic abusive situation rather than a public display of violence because the latter could be an isolated event. If the abuse is possibly a part of an abusive cycle, the audience members felt an intervention would be ineffective because they were unable to see whether the intervention had a permanent effect on the relationship.

The third scene is placed at a house party and presents a sexual assault. The audience members were asked to place themselves into the environment of the party and navigate through the situation in order to intervene in the assault. There were several opportunities for the audience to intervene throughout the scene. First, a party member

passed out from intoxication on his back. Second, a party member who is intoxicated took a phone call and explicitly stated that she would drive to her friend's house. During this time, the perpetrator separated himself from the other people at the party. (This performance happened to be using a male perpetrator and a female victim due to casting, but any gender can play either role). The perpetrator then called another party player to the center of the stage to discuss how he is going to have sex with a particular woman at the party, the victim, and asked his friend to be the "wing-man." In this context the wing-man's job was to distract the victim's friend from the advances the perpetrator made. After the perpetrator forced the victim to take a shot of alcohol the victim asked her friend if she could be taken home but her friend denied the request because she was not ready to leave the party. The victim was approached by the perpetrator to join him in his bedroom to view his movie collection. After the victim was convinced to go upstairs to watch a movie, the perpetrator and the wing-man had a celebratory moment because the perpetrator succeeded in luring the victim away from the party where he can sexually assault her.

The main focus of the scene is the sexual assault. However, because this scene can be replayed multiple times, the script allows for the audience to explore several issues including but not limited to: consent, alcohol safety, sexual assault, and bystander intervention. The audience was more responsive to this scene than they were to the second scene. Some of the intervention strategies explored were taking party members' keys, using the buddy system where you stay with someone throughout the entire party, inviting other party members to go with the victim to investigate the reality of the movie,

and convincing the victim to remain with the other members at the party through distraction tactics such as food or games.

The show closed at 9:30 PM making the run time an hour and a half. Before the audience members exited the theater, I thanked them for their participation as well as directed them to the back of the playbill that provided services both on campus and off campus for anyone who has experienced or been affected by relationship violence.

The demographics of the audience were limited with 67 percent of the survey participants between the ages of 19 and 25 and 79 percent of those identifying as female.

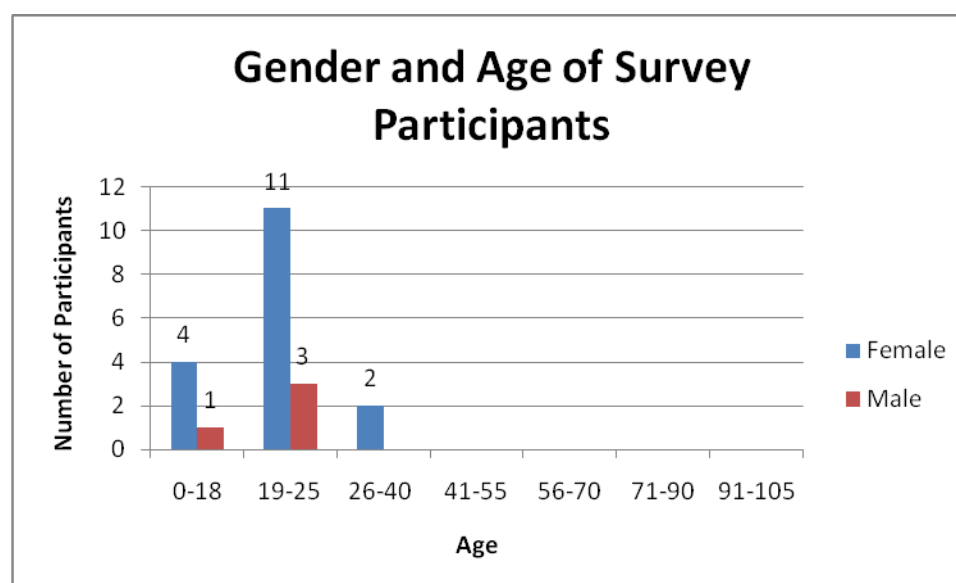


Figure 4.1. Gender and Age of Survey Participants

Additionally, 90 percent of the survey participants were students from MNSU. *Table 3.1* charts the survey participants' demographic information.

Survey #	Gender	Age	MNSU Student	Hometown
1	Female	0-18	Yes	Waconia, MN
2	Female	0-18	Yes	Detroit Lakes, MN
3	Female	0-18	Yes	Mankato, MN
4	Female	0-18	Yes	Austin, MN

5	Male	0-18	Yes	Cottage Grove, MN
6	Female	19-25	Yes	Minneapolis, MN
7	Female	19-25	Yes	Mankato, MN
8	Female	19-25	Yes	Minneapolis, MN
9	Female	19-25	Yes	Milwaukee, WI
10	Female	19-25	Yes	St. Cloud, MN
11	Female	19-25	Yes	Slayton, MN
12	Female	19-25	Yes	St. Michael, MN
13	Female	19-25	Yes	Coon Rapids, MN
14	Female	19-25	Yes	Rochester, MN
15	Female	19-25	Yes	Mankato, MN
16	Female	19-25	Yes	Waconia, MN
17	Male	19-25	Yes	Galena, IL
18	Male	19-25	Yes	Mankato, MN
19	Male	19-25	Yes	Lake Crystal, MN
20	Female	26-40	No	Mankato, MN
21	Female	26-40	No	Mankato, MN

*Table 4.1.* Survey Sample Demographics.

Although these demographics are too narrow to make over-arching conclusions on Theatre of the Oppressed as a whole, almost every audience member chose to participate in the survey offering responses that evaluate the success of this performance.

Along with the demographic information, the survey also contained five open-ended questions to evaluate the success of the performance. *Table 4.1* displays the survey

results from these five questions. The highlighted portions will be used in the discussion portion of this chapter to demonstrate survey answers that suggest action.

Survey #	Q#1: What was the most valuable thing you learned from the performance?
1	Buddy system in any situation is always good
2	Help others
3	How to use a buddy at a party
4	
5	
6	Step in when you can
7	I learned to see violence is more common, you just have to be aware.
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	You can do something!
13	A lot of the situations were real life and happen every day. We always see them.
14	That women aren't the only gender that can be a victim of assault.
15	Intervention techniques
16	
17	Always listen
18	There isn't one "correct" way to intervene, but often still necessary
19	The world doesn't change for the better by sitting on your ass.
20	Audience participation. Very effective as an educational tool.

21	
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Table 4.2. Audience Survey Results Q#1.

Survey #	Q#2: What did you enjoy/benefit from the most?
1	It was true and I can relate from experience. I was skeptical about the audience interaction at first but I loved it as we got into it.
2	Humor
3	The acting was great
4	Probably the situation where the woman and man were fighting-you see that all the time but don't know how to react.
5	From the party scene
6	It was fun and informative
7	It felt personal
8	The alcohol/drunken scene. Helping people while they are drunk.
9	The interacting. I liked the small groups.
10	Interacting of the audience.
11	I enjoyed the actual role play. It keeps it more interesting and more entertaining than just listening to someone talk.
12	Practicing the situation
13	The variety of situations and seeing the possible outcomes of our actions or the situations going unsolved.
14	The audience involvement
15	The different skits
16	Seeing the realistic situations and the possible outcomes to each reaction, it made me really think of what I would do and what I could do in the future.
17	Alternative solutions
18	It was like practice. Giving a controlled opportunity to do what we all want to do.
19	I liked the audience involvement, bringing power to the people.

20	The dialogue and problem solving
21	

*Table 4.3. Audience Survey Results.Q#2.*

Survey #	Q#3: What did you enjoy benefit from the least?
1	Nothing really, I enjoyed everything!
2	Too many skits
3	It was really long
4	
5	The show was excellent I can't think of things to improve it.
6	I liked it all! ☺
7	A little more guidance
8	
9	Nothing
10	
11	---
12	
13	Just that most bystanders would not have enough guts to speak up.
14	The "maybe"-nothing was a for sure way to help.
15	Nothing
16	The repetitiveness of each presentation
17	Monotopical focus
18	
19	The pretzel props.
20	
21	

*Table 4.4. Audience Survey Results Q#3.*

Survey #	Q#4: What would you like to see added or changed about the performance?
1	Nothing ☺
2	Performance much too long
3	It was really long.
4	
5	Nothing
6	Time flew by, I wish there was time for more situations.
7	Increase the severity of the problem. The importance of the problem seemed to be overlooked.
8	Everything was good.
9	Yes, more
10	More statistics/information
11	Maybe time for more skits
12	More abuse between male and female
13	I guess more college related situations (party situations)
14	Maybe more of what actually helps
15	More different relationships between people
16	Nothing, very entertaining.
17	Last a bit longer
18	I almost want to ease in more, starting with less drastic situations.
19	Being brought to larger audiences!
20	



21	
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Table 4.5. Audience Survey Results Q#4.

Survey #	Q#5: Would you recommend this performance? If yes, to whom?
1	Yes. To my friends, anyone with these problems.
2	Yes, only to gender violence people
3	Yes!
4	Yes! To everyone who could possibly be faced with these issues/situations-which is everyone!
5	Yes. For everyone in a young community area high school/college.
6	Yes. To all who like to give input and advice.
7	Yes, anyone.
8	Yes. Friends that have these (similar) problems with relationships, drinking too much.
9	Yes!
10	Yes, to high school and college students.
11	Yes, everyone should see this.
12	Yes to anyone...everyone can benefit.
13	Yes! To anyone that is looking for info, or how to stay safe.
14	Yes, anyone in my hall *boyfriend*
15	Yes, to my friends.
16	Yes.
17	Yes, everyone.

18	Absolutely.
19	Yes, to anyone whom I would expect could become a situational advocate.
20	Yes-all students and educators.
21	

*Table 4.6. Audience Survey Results Q#5.*

The final portion of the survey provided a space for audience members to leave additional comments. Because there were only a few that are applicable to this research I have included these comments outside of the previous table.

6) I wasn't expecting to really enjoy the event but was surprised I enjoyed it A LOT. Way more than other events. It was relatable and emotional too sometimes.

7) How do I get involved?

8) This play is very emotional and gets people to think about ways to prevent these bad situations. It shows different methods in person instead of just hearing about what you should do, you actually see from the play.

20) Very effective.

Following the performance the actors were invited to a separate room to participate in the focus group interview. I facilitated the focus group interview process and was present during the interview. Seven out of the eight actors participated. Five out of the seven identified as female with the remaining two identifying as male. Before beginning the focus group questions I asked each sample member to contribute any personal information that they felt comfortable including that would be applicable to this

research. *Table 4.3* charts these results and provides a code for each participant that can be used in review of the full interview results in Appendix 3.

	Gender	Race	Age	MNSU student	Major/Minor	Additional
FG1	male	White	19	first year	Major: Geology/Physics Minor: Art	
FG2	male	White	22	second year	History/Geography	
FG3	female	White	19	first year	Major: Theatre	
FG4	female	White	20	second year	Major: English Minor: Theatre	
FG5	female	half mexican/half white	19	first year	Theatre	
FG6	female	half black/half white	18	first year	Theatre	survivor of childhood sexual abuse
FG7	female	Caucasian	20	second year	Major: BS in Economics	survivor of childhood sexual abuse

*Table 4.7.* Focus Group Interview Sample Demographics.

All participants in the focus group interview are students at MNSU and are active in programs that educate and raise awareness on sexual assault and relationship violence.

In order to analyze the actors' experiences as part of the production process, I color coded the participants responses from the focus group interview under four categories. These categories were not identified prior to the interview but developed as natural topics that arose during the interview. Because the categories were not pre-set, one question is not able to fit into the common themes. This is specified under that particular question.

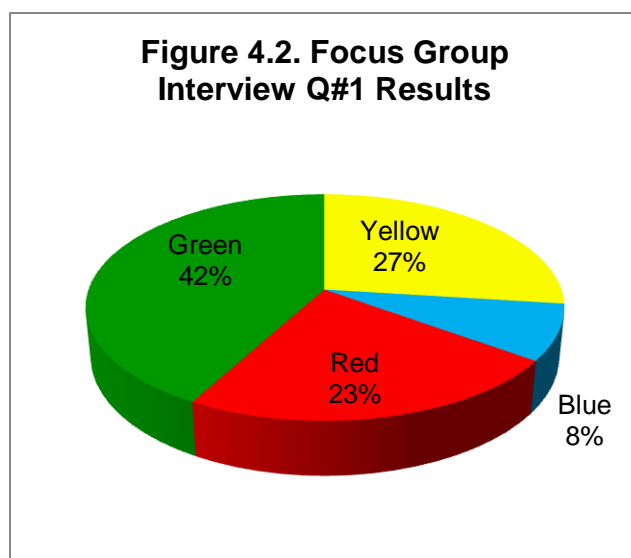
Yellow	Blue	Red	Green
<b>Teaching Others:</b> This refers to the information that was taught to the audience members.	<b>Personal Healing:</b> This refers to the healing process of the actor from a personal trauma.	<b>Personal Awareness:</b> This refers to what the actor learned through the production process.	<b>Theatre of the Oppressed:</b> This refers to any references to the format of Forum Theatre that would separate it from other educational formats.

*Table 4.8. Color Coding for the Focus Group Interview*

The first question asked during the focus group interview was “What was the most valuable or beneficial aspect of being a part of this production?” Most of the participants responded on the educational value in teaching others. However, many felt that they gained personal understanding from the material as well.

The common themes related to teaching others are the show's ability to provide a controlled setting for the audience to practice real life situations and the opportunity for

the audience members to connect to the scenarios. “It’s always in the back of my mind



that there could be someone in the audience who didn’t know they’d been sexually assaulted/abused or someone who didn’t know they were sexually assaulting/abusing someone,” commented *FG4*. Additionally, *FG5* continued, “I think this play teaches a valuable lesson on how to intervene

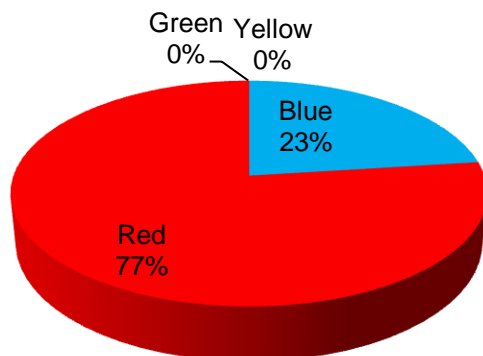
when in a difficult situation and how to help a friend if they are in a bad relationship.”

Not only did the interviewees teach bystander intervention techniques, but they also learned ones for themselves. “The most valuable/beneficial aspect for me with being involved in the ‘*When...*’ production was that I learned new ways of bystander intervention,” commented *FG7*. The cast members that do not have personal experience with abuse were able to explore what an abusive experience would be like. Two participants commented, “For me this show really opened my eyes to the pain that women of this [domestic] abuse feel, I once upon a time had no sympathy for women in domestically abusive relationships and I didn’t understand why the women currently in them stayed,” (*FG6*) and “I was learning myself, I have never really been a part of violence and it was just an eye opener for me” (*FG3*).

The second question addressed was “What did you learn from this experience?” This was a more personal question for the participants, which altered the response categories. Several of the participants commented on how they learned to use

intervention in their own lives as well as how to help someone who has been assaulted.

**Figure 4.3. Focus Group Interview Q#2 Results**

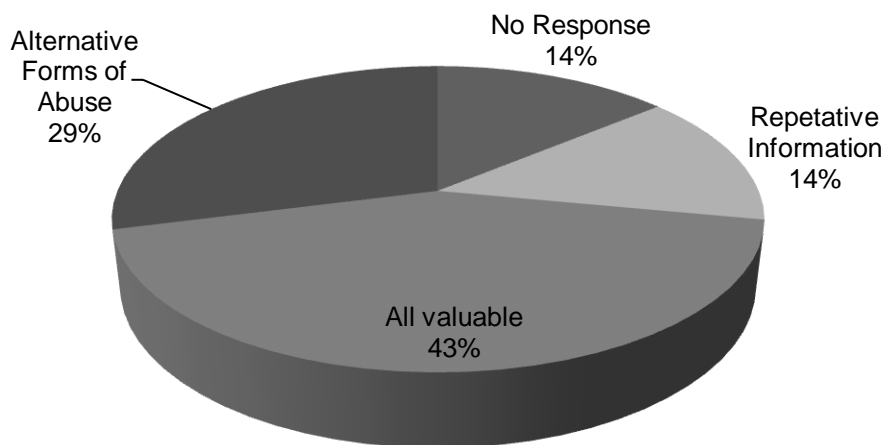


Along with listening and being nonjudgmental, *FG3* added, “I have learned that there are many different ways for healing, and each victim of violence has their own way and own time frame of healing.” Some commented on the personal healing that they gained through their

experience. *FG4* remarked, “I always learn even more about myself when I do these sorts of things. Working with a group of people that provides time for discussion and reflection is a very good tool for that [healing].” In addition, *FG2* discussed how being a part of this production has helped him with his public speaking skills and his communication with others.

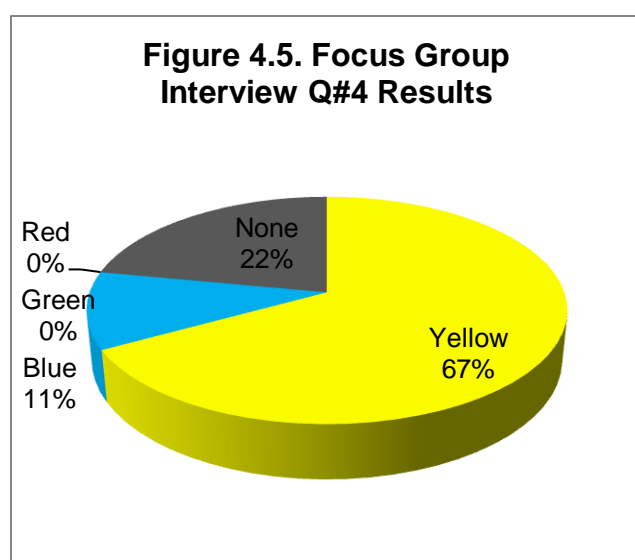
The next question was “What was the least valuable or beneficial aspect of being

**Figure 4.4. Focus Group Interview Q#3 Results**



a part of this production?” This response was more difficult to evaluate as most of the

respondents said they felt the whole performance was valuable. Therefore, I veered from the color coded guide. Almost half of the participants said that they felt everything in the show was valuable. *FG3* stated that she felt the information was repetitive; however this is the only participant who has performed “*When...*” twice. Twenty-nine percent of the group said they wished there were alternative forms of relationships including more same-sex relationships and demonstrating warning signs of abusive relationships, focusing on earlier in the abuse cycle. The interview transitioned naturally into the following question that helped the participants frame the previous question more



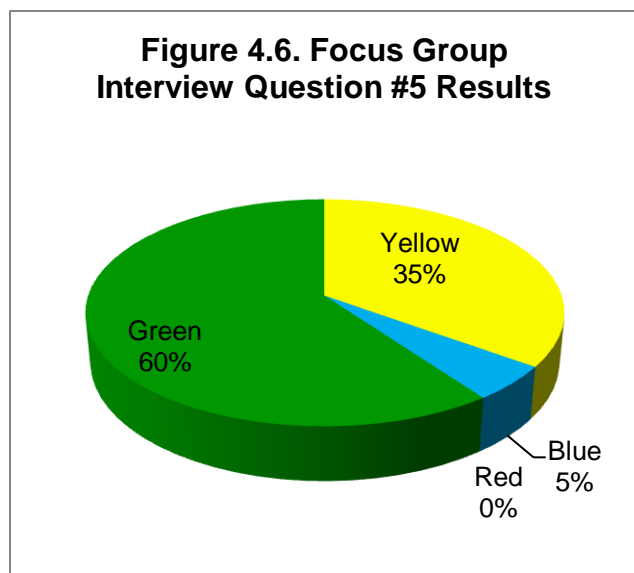
effectively. The question was “What would you add or change about the performance?” I returned to the color coding system to separate the responses into themes however these represent areas that need improvement rather than positive aspects. I have also added the category of “none” as

two participants chose not to respond or said that there was nothing that they would add to the production.

Most of the participants commented on material that they wish would have been addressed more strongly or added to the scripts. These again included adding more situations that presented same-sex relationships and focusing on those who may be abusing but aren’t able to recognize it. *FG6* expanded on this by saying, “One major scenario that would be beneficial would be a scene with parental violence towards a

child. More than anything there is a lot of child abuse around the world, and it can also be one of the most difficult to intervene.” I have coded this reflection under both teaching others and personal healing as this participant member wished to expose that she is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

The final question during the focus group interview was “Do you feel that this



style of theatre could be a useful tool for education and why? And in what venue?” Every participant felt that Theater of the Oppressed was a beneficial educational tool based on their experience in this performance. Figure 3.6 focuses on why they felt Theatre of the Oppressed is successful.

Thirty-five percent of the responses indicated that the participants felt that Theatre of the Oppressed was a successful tool because of the educational value. *FG5* notes, “I feel that it can be used not just for this specific subject [relationship violence], but for any subject that requires action. It could be used to show young kids things such as bully-intervention or something as simple as how to be a good friend.” Over half, 60 percent, of the participants said that it is the format of Theatre of the Oppressed that makes it successful. *FG1* focused on how the format can motivate action, transitioning theory to praxis: “This form of theatre is a great way to get people motivated and excited and ready to learn” (*FG1*). Many of the participants enjoyed the interactive quality: “I think everyone, everywhere will learn more from seeing things acted out and being able to



offer solutions and work them out in a hands-on way as opposed to being lectured about the topic for an hour” (FG4).

Another participant observed that Theatre of the Oppressed can also connect communities across cultural differences due to the discussion and interactive portion of the production that allows for marginalized voices to be heard and valued. FG2 explained, “offering Theater of the Oppressed to classrooms I feel would help ease children into more sociable beings in a fun and memorable way since they can perform as part of the audience. I also believe Theater of the Oppressed would help children communicate with other children of different cultures, (etc.).”

Combining the focus group interview results with the audience surveys demonstrates how Theatre of the Oppressed was a successful educational tool for the performance at MNSU on March 1, 2012. “*When...*” employs the methods of Augusto Boal by using Forum Theatre, the Joker system, and presenting a topic applicable to the audience. Additionally, “*When...*” eliminates Paulo Freire’s banking system critique of education by encouraging audience participation through discussion and improvisation acting. Finally, “*When...*” impresses critical thinking on the audience questioning what they would do in the scripted situations and prompting them to explore action rather than passivity. The discussion section will explore possible reasons behind the result findings, areas of limitations, and hopes for continued research in this field.

## **Discussion**

The audience size on March 1, 2012 was the smallest audience for whom “*When...*” has been performed. This posed some concerns for me as I was unsure how

the small group aspect would affect the audience interaction. I speculate the attendance size was affected by the performance date, which was scheduled for the Thursday before spring break. Although it was more challenging to spark the discussion portion, the audience members were very willing to come on stage to participate in the improvisations. One audience member commented in her survey that she “appreciated the small group” (S# 9). Although the audience was active and participated in the performance, this particular group struggled with using bystander intervention as an alternative to calling the police. It is very important for those educating on intervention to understand that bystander intervention should not be used if the person intervening is putting their safety at risk. Once a situation has escalated to a dangerous level, using police to end an aggression may be the only option. What I encouraged the audience to focus on was the moments before the aggression reached that level. I directed the actors to leave what I called a “plateau” moment, an opportunity for an intervention, to occur before the scene escalated out of control to challenge the apathy of the audience. I was able to guide the audience to see the moments of opportunity and eventually they did explore intervention ideas.

Another obstacle that was addressed during the audience discussion portion of the production was that the audience found it more difficult to intervene in a romantic relationship than a friendship. This became particularly challenging with the heterosexual relationship in scene two, section three. Although we did demonstrate a romantic relationship in the previous section, the one between the male and the female seemed to hold more of an official status to the audience. I argue that this demonstrates a heteronormative mentality in the geographical location of the performance. The largest

struggle during the discussion portion was that we, as bystanders, cannot control the abuse that occurs outside of the intervention.

The challenges that the audience faced are a result of internalized oppression, a phenomenon Boal addresses in his text, *Rainbow of Desire*. Boal calls this The Cop in the Head<sup>2</sup>, suggesting that it is an internal voice that tells us what we should and should not do (40). However, this voice is affected by society and culture and must be explored to identify oppression. Boal presents three hypotheses on how The Cop in the Head can be destructive to someone taking action and hinder the success of Theatre of the Oppressed.

The first hypothesis, osmosis, applies to the challenges present in Forum Theatre (Boal 40). Boal suggests that the smallest interactions with people, culture, and society become ingrained in our subconscious. Once we have experienced a similar event a few times, it receives a symbol for that experience. We attach these symbols to mundane things, such as an immediate distaste for particular foods. We also attach them to social issues such as sexism, racism, and classism. Even though the two above examples are very different in severity, they have received the same symbol, sometimes without one knowing. In the context of this performance, the audience had a difficult time recognizing relationship violence outside of a heterosexual relationship.

Out of approximately 25 audience members, 21 surveys were submitted for this research. Although the surveys can be used to show the success of this particular performance, the audience sample was too small to make a concrete conclusion. Additionally, the performance would need to be performed multiple times in different locations to gather a wider audience demographic. Although the sample was very small,

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<sup>2</sup> "The Cop in the Head" is capitalized to follow the formatting provided by Augusto Boal in his text *Rainbow of Desire*.

the surveys provide valuable information on what succeeded and areas for further research.

The responses to the first question, “What was the most valuable thing you learned from the performance?” gained a variety of responses. Some included learning bystander intervention strategies, using the buddy system at parties, recognizing abuse and different forms of abuse, and ways to help a survivor of abuse. The range of these responses provides two conclusions. The first is that it is beneficial to present different angles and situations that revolve around a main concept during a production. This allows the audience members opportunities to connect to different moments and reach a wider audience. It also demonstrates the Joker’s ability to guide the audience through the format process and encourage discussion and exploration. The Joker does not tell the audience what they are supposed to learn from each scene, but rather lets the audience’s discussion focus the show inside the context of the overall idea.

The second survey question “What did you enjoy or benefit from the most?” were mostly audience members connecting with which scene or improvisation they felt was most valuable. However, five out of the 21 surveys identified that the interactive portion of the performance was the most enjoyable or beneficial. This is equal to nearly a quarter (24 percent) of the research participants.

I originally organized the survey results by how the audience identified their sex because all of the audience participants identified as either male or female, creating two separate tables. I was interested in seeing how gender difference affected the participant’s response. I realized in looking at the two charts together that the results were relatively similar, showing that both male and females had comparable reactions. Therefore, I

decided to combine the two tables and organize the results by age instead. The new table format showed that the difference in survey results had to do with age rather than gender. *Table 4.2* shows that a negative aspect that was found in the surveys was the length of the production. In response to both question three “What did you enjoy/benefit from the least?” and four “What would you like to see added or change about the performance?” two participants responded that the performance was either too long or needed to be shortened. Both of these participants are in the age category of 0-18. However, four audience members in the age category of 19-25 wanted the performance to be longer.

The last question on the survey was “Would you recommend this performance? If yes, to whom?” 20 out of the 21 surveys responded that they would recommend this performance. The survey who did not respond with yes left the question unanswered. Three members responded that they would recommend it to a friend; nine said they would recommend it to anyone, and three recommended this performance to a high school or college setting.

These results suggest that this performance was successful educational tool for feminist pedagogy, but is it an applicable tool to move theory to praxis? Did this performance spark social change? In order to address this question I went back over all five questions of the audience survey and noted what responses suggested action. These responses have been shaded in gray in *Tables 4.2* through *4.6*. Sixty-two percent of the responses reflected a motive for someone to either take action or that they learned tools to do so. These tools are risk reduction strategies, using bystander intervention or action, and recommending the performance to someone else. Over 50 percent of the audience reflected on ways that they could continue to be a part of raising awareness or

recognizing aspects of their lives that they will change in the future demonstrating a transition from theory to praxis.

Seven out of the eight actors volunteered to participate in the focus group interview. Although the results from this sample are extremely valuable, I also acknowledge that they are unique to what would have been found from actors who never experienced this style of theatre before. All seven members of the focus group are actively involved in a program on the MNSU campus that uses Theatre of the Oppressed as a form of education and focuses on the topics of sexual assault, consent, bullying, and bystander intervention. They had foundational knowledge before entering the rehearsal process, making it difficult for me to assess the educational value it had on the actors. They were able to explain key concepts of Theatre of the Oppressed such as the use of a controlled setting, the concept of practice for real life, and using realistic scenarios even though these specific concepts were not addressed in the rehearsal process. This is both positive and negative. It shows that these students already had opportunities to perform Theatre of the Oppressed and wanted to continue their activism work. The negative aspect was that the focus group interview was highly unlikely to get a negative response from the acting experience as all of the actors enjoyed the process enough to return. In addition, the sample had extensive experience working with me in other programs on the university. I also chose to facilitate the interview process. The focus group interview results are shaped based on the relationships between me and the sample and my choice to be present during the interview. This could have caused the interviewees to only provide answers they thought would satisfied the research results positively. Because of this, the focus group interview focused more on what other topics could be applied to the

format or how the show could be altered to reach a wider audience finding areas for continued research.

Many students addressed wanting more examples of same-sex relationships in the script. The show does provide opportunities to switch genders around in abusive situations and alter the sexual orientation of the relationships. Some audience members will come with a higher understanding of relationship violence and an open mind to expand the conversation than others. If the audience is not challenged by the original representation I will extend it to a more challenging situation, such as same-sex relationship violence. This particular audience had more difficulty than others thinking outside of social norms, and therefore I assessed that I should not further complicate certain scenarios.

Additionally, I argue that the focus group interview sample presented the same-sex relationship critique because they have been educated on relationship violence for some time. What is common knowledge to them may not be for the audience, and the students were looking to be challenged. Another participant also added that they would like to see the show address childhood sexual assault and be used more in parental programs. It is because of the focus group interview responses in addition to the 62 percent of the surveys that suggested social change that I argue that the performance of *"When..."* on March 1, 2012 at MNSU demonstrates a production in Theatre of the Oppressed that transitioned feminist theory to praxis.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

Forum Theatre is used in areas of “political protest, education, therapy, prison, health, management and local government, as well as infiltrating the mainstream theatre establishment” (Babbage 1). This thesis reviews the performance of “*When...*” that took place on March 1, 2012 to demonstrate the success of Forum Theatre as an educational tool in feminist pedagogy. 21 audience members provided surveys that offered testimony to the success of the performance, with 95 percent of those surveys stating that Theatre of the Oppressed was a valuable educational tool for the performance. The surveys also provide examples of the information the audience retained from the playbill including how to help a survivor of abuse, risk reduction, bystander intervention, and recognize abuse.

Seven out of eight actors also provided testimony through a focus group interview reflecting on the value of being a part of the production process. Their responses focused on teaching others, personal healing, personal awareness, and Theatre of the Oppressed as an educational format. All of the focus group interview participants also attested that Theatre of the Oppressed was a valuable educational tool and many expressed interest in expanding the program to encompass alternative situations of abuse or new topics all together.

While collecting the results from the performance I found areas where this research could be expanded. I made the audience surveys as short as possible because I worried that a longer survey would hinder some people from participating. Although this



is still the case, I would like to expand the surveys to focus on what exact aspects of Theatre of the Oppressed they felt were valuable.

In addition, I would have provided a short quiz on the concepts of relationship violence to the actors involved in the production before and after the performance to assess how much information they learned from the show. As mentioned before, the audience sample for this performance had previous knowledge in both the topic and format of the show. Had I distributed a quiz before the rehearsal process began, I would have more information on whether the actors were able to pull new material from this performance. Because the audience contributes in the educational exchange in this format, both the Joker and the actors should be able to gather new insights and experience from each performance regardless of the levity of previous knowledge. I would also like to visit with the focus group sample again at a future date to see how much information they retained and if they indeed moved the intervention tactics into action. Additionally, I would perform "*When...*" at a different university with a cast that has no training in Theatre of the Oppressed before beginning rehearsals and no past experience working with me as a director so that personal relationships may not shade the actors responses. This would also separate me from the cast and may allow for deeper honesty as personal feelings are not as closely connected. Unfortunately, because of the time constraints of this research I was unable to do follow up testing with the focus group sample.

Finally, I would further explore the different responses to the production based on the age of the audience members. I would present the same show to a controlled audience of 0-18 years of age and 19-25 years of age and verify whether the results from this particular survey do confirm that those between the ages of 0-18 are less likely to connect

to the scenes presented in the current script providing more areas for expansion and improvement.

Relationship violence is a serious issue that takes place in every culture, location, community, and field. It is a difficult topic to address when everyone's personal experience with abuse is altered based on their particular identities. From the Midwestern United States, I see an immense passivity about relationship violence. What do we do with the knowledge we have? What do we do to continue a societal stand against abuse? As one of my focus group members told me at every rehearsal, "The first step to change is education." Theatre of the Oppressed is one tool of many that can advance the education in feminist pedagogy, particularly relationship violence, and begin to transition theory to praxis through an interactive knowledge exchange between educators and communities. The performance of "*When...*" at MNSU on March 1, 2012 is just one example of how to finally fill the gap between practitioners and academics in higher education.

## APPENDIX 1

**Audience Survey Copy**

## Audience Survey

*\*Please note that this survey's results will be included in Rae's research. This survey is optional.\**

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: *circle one*                      0-18   19-25   26-40   41-55   56-70   71-90   91-105

Are you a student of MNSU? Y        N

Are you a Mankato resident? Y        N    If not, what is your hometown?

\_\_\_\_\_

1. *What was the most valuable thing you learned from the performance?*
2. *What did you enjoy/benefit from the most?*
3. *What did you enjoy/benefit from the least?*
4. *What would you like to see added or change about the performance?*
5. *Would you recommend this performance? If yes, whom?*

Please place any additional comments on the back. Thank you very much for your participation.

## APPENDIX 2

### **Focus Group Interview Discussion Themes**

#### Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What was the most valuable/beneficial aspect of being a part of this production?
2. What did you learn through this experience?
3. What was the least valuable/beneficial aspect of being a part of this production?
4. What would you add or change about the performance?
5. Do you feel that this style of theatre could be a useful tool for education, why?

And in what venue?

## APPENDIX 3

**Focus Group Interview Color Coded Results****Focus Group Interview Results**

7 out of 8 actors participated in the Focus Group Interview post performance of “*When...*” at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MNSU) on March 1, 2012.

The focus group interview results were gathered through notations during the interview process that were edited into complete sentences at a later date. The interview responses were color coded based on the following themes:

Yellow	Blue	Red	Green
<b>Teaching Others:</b> This refers to the information that was taught to the audience members.	<b>Personal Healing:</b> This refers to the healing process of the actor from a personal trauma.	<b>Personal Awareness:</b> This refers to what the actor learned through the production process.	<b>Theatre of the Oppressed:</b> This refers to any references to the format of Forum Theatre that would separate it from other educational formats.

The transcript provided was approved by all focus group participants on March 8, 2012.

**1. What was the most valuable/beneficial aspect of being a part of this production?**

FG1: One of the biggest things in the show was the fact that all of the things that we did can be used in real life situations. This is a controlled environment that Megan taught this super important info in. We can't really say that everyone in the audience will act in an aggressive situation the best way or even at all... but at least we gave them all; the tools to succeed in a situation like this.

FG4: I've done this show 2 times now, and I always keep coming back with the hope that we will help people. It's always in the back of my mind that there could be someone in the audience who didn't know they'd been sexually assaulted/abused or someone who didn't know they were sexually assaulting/abusing someone. It's important to be an educator for these kinds of issues, because there are so many gray areas. People need to be able to talk about these issues to see those gray areas and work through them.

FG7: The most valuable/beneficial aspect for me with being involved in the "When..." production was that I learned new ways of bystander intervention. I also learned that you shouldn't always assume that people are in good relationships even if they don't say anything.

FG6: For me this show really opened my eyes to the pain that women of this abuse feel, I once upon a time had no sympathy for women in domestically abusive relationships and I didn't understand why the women currently in them stayed. The first scene really put this in perspective because of my personal background (a survivor of childhood sexual abuse) I truly never understood why these women stayed and why these women didn't fight back. Now because of this show I think I have a better perspective, I know that these women just need friends with ears and you can't help anyone who isn't ready to be helped. This is the most valuable discovery I had in this show.

*FG5:* I really enjoyed the connections that we had as a cast and felt comfortable with everyone to go to if I had a problem. I made new friendships and have strengthened others. I think this play teaches a valuable lesson on how to intervene when in a difficult situation and how to help a friend if they are in a bad relationship. It was also nice being able to show other people the same things in an interactive way that let them see if their own ideas would work or not. Being able to be a part of this production was great because I got a chance to help others with personal problems and help strangers learn to intervene.

*FG2:* I feel that the most valuable aspect of being a part of your production was the learning experience of the different situations and the time we had all spent going through the rehearsal.

*FG3:* The most valuable / beneficial aspect of being a part of this production, was the fact that I knew I was teaching kids and adults how to deal with difficult situations. Also I was learning myself, I have never really been a part of violence and it was just an eye opener for me. And I now know how and when to put these skills to use.

## **2. What did you learn through this experience?**

*FG1:* Honestly... I learned about the way that these situations can go and lots of different ways to handle all sorts of different situations. I learned a lot about all the people in the cast and how different situations take their toll on people and all the things that we all have to do in order to get through the shit that fuck with us on a daily basis.

*FG4:* I always learn even more about myself when I do this sort of experiences. Working with a group of people that provides time for discussion and reflection is a very good tool for that. I come to more realizations about how my life has affected me, and I learn new

ways to communicate to the audience. It's always a growing experience, even if I have done it before.

*FG6:* I learned many ways to help people, whether it is in big tough things or small problems. I will no longer be a "Paige" to my friends when they are in trouble and I will be more of a listener and more understanding.

*FG5:* I learned how to intervene when in situations where people are raising fights in public. I also learned how to help a friend in a violent relationship and how to be strong and confident in you to walk away from dangerous situations. I also was able to learn how to intervene if someone is potentially in danger of rape or sexual assault. Knowing these things will be helpful if a friend comes to me with a situation that sketchy and I will be able to support them in a positive way.

*FG7:* I learned a lot about victim blaming and new ways of bystander intervention.

*FG2:* "When..." taught me the value of being someone's friend and also taught me a way to socially express myself better in front of one person to a whole crowd.

*FG3:* I have learned that there are many different ways for healing, and each victim of violence has their own way and own time frame of healing. All you can really do is sit there and be supportive of that person, help them how they want to be helped. Do not force them to do anything. Healing takes time.

### **3. What was the least valuable/beneficial aspect of being a part of this production?**

*FG4:* The only thing, to me, that seems like it may be invaluable is hearing the same information over and over again but I don't mind that. It helps me to REALLY cement the information in my head so I will remember it no matter what.



*FG6:* I think everything in this experience/show was beneficial, but maybe the least valuable to me was the third scene. I feel as though I know many ways to stop this situation because I have fixed it in many ways.

*FG5:* I think everything was beneficial. I especially think the intervention scenes were important because it allowed people to interact and try out ideas of their own. I also liked the idea that audience was able to see first-hand and learn by trial and error. All three scenes brought a new perspective on an issue and the discussion allowed the audience to present how they felt about them. I think I can say that the cast as a whole got a lot out of this experience because we also learned new ways to intervene and how to help a friend and even got to help each other (experiencing first-hand the world of intervention and caring for others).

*FG3:* I honestly do not think there was anything that was not valuable or beneficial in this production.

*FG2:* I think the least valuable aspect was the fact that we did not perform the same-sex relationship roles as much as the heterosexual roles for the bar scenes.

*FG1:* I think that the problems with what we were teaching in the show are super real... on occasions. These things do happen in life and in public, but there are so many abusive relationships and forms of abuse that these different forms should be identified. I think that all abuse starts at a certain point that isn't as extreme as it end up being. People start abusing and being abused in a very subtle way that is so hard to see and so hard to identify that it will eventually turn aggressive and nether the abuser or the person being abused will notice what is going on. This is what we don't identify in the show...

#### **4. What would you add or change about the performance?**

*FG1:* ... And I think this (reference above comment from *FG1*) is a very important thing that needs to be shown and identified. That may require a little more work to get the audience to get it but I think that if abuse is something that we eventually want to stop, it needs to be attacked at the source. That's a much more effective way to eliminate a problem.

*FG4:* I would love to see the female/male fight scene flipped every time. I think people can see that she is being abusive, but sometimes it just takes that switch to really cement it in their brain that abuse can happen to anyone, from anyone.

*FG3:* This question is hard.... I don't know that I would add or change anything...

*FG5:* I would like to see more solutions for people who didn't know they were being abusive and would like to make a change. There are people who show signs of abusive behavior and do not realize it until they see something like this or someone points it out to them. I think there should be solutions on how to fix this relationship and make it better.

*FG2:* Like I had said before, the same-sex relationship aspect needs to be more of a focus rather than a side project for the play. Other than that the performance is completely genius and I feel it needs no other changes.

*FG6:* I would maybe add more scenarios. One major scenario that would be beneficial would be a scene with parental violence towards a child. More than anything there is a lot of child abuse around the world, and it can also be one of the most difficult to intervene. I think doing a scene to teach people how to deal with child abuse would be extremely beneficial.

**5. Do you feel that this style of theatre could be a useful tool for education, why?**

**And in what venue?**

*FG7:* I believe fully in my heart that this form of theater is extremely educational and I believe that it should be used in schools K - College. This form of theater could save a lot of victims and it could open the eyes of future perpetrators. I believe that if my brother would have been in the audience seeing a show like "when..." way back when, then maybe he would have made very different decisions in life.

*FG1:* This style of theatre can be used to teach almost anything. Although it may be a little earlier in the social sciences and issues, it can be modified to literally teach anything. Education has two main forms; hands on form of teaching and a lecture based style. The Theatre of the Oppressed strategy because the biggest problem in teaching is motivation. You can teach something and teach something but if the students aren't willing to learn, the education stops right there and proceeds no further. This form of theatre is a great way to get people motivated and excited and ready to learn. Chalk up one for Megan Rae and experiential education.

*FG4:* Absolutely. I think Theatre of the Oppressed is extremely important. I think everyone, everywhere will learn more from seeing things acted out and being able to offer solutions and work them out in a hands-on way as opposed to being lectured about the topic for an hour. I know that I am a more visual learner and some people are not, but it's easier to point out the issues and the gray areas like I was talking about earlier when the audience can physically see what is happening in front of them.

FG6: I think this style of theater is a great learning tool, I especially think that this could be used as a tool to open up parents minds and maybe teach children (if the topic was changed) how to help people and what they should do in certain situations.

FG5: Yes! I feel that it can be used not just for this specific subject, but for any subject that requires action. It could be used to show young kids things such as “bully-intervention” or something as simple as how to “be a good friend”. I feel that young kids would benefit from this form of theatre because they would be able to have fun while learning at the same time (because what kid wants to sit in a classroom all day and be talked at, I know I didn’t!) I feel that this can also be beneficial to any other age as well and can range from a variety of different issues. The college world is a good place for things such as these because even though we are adults, we are new to the world on our own and need to learn to take care of ourselves and our loved ones. There will not always be someone there to protect you so you have to learn to protect yourself. I feel that this style of theatre can be useful in all ways!

FG2: I feel this style of education can be useful to all styles of education starting at young ages. Offering Theater of the Oppressed to classrooms I feel would help ease children into more sociable beings in a fun and memorable way since they can perform as part of the audience. I also believe Theater of the Oppressed would help children communicate with other children of different cultures, etc.

FG3: I feel this type of theatre is and extremely useful tool for education. One, this is a fun way to learn and kids and teens and adults respond more positively towards a fun way of learning. Also it is hands-on and I know I am not the only person in this world who thinks hands-on learning is much better way of learning, it helps me retain the

information. Also it would be good in a little kids environment, if we can teach little kids at an early age what violence is and that it is wrong we might be able to reduce the number of victims each year (I know this is a big hope but it is good to dream that it can happen).

## APPENDIX 4

**Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**

February 16, 2012

Dear Maria Bevacqua:

Re: IRB Proposal entitled "[289823-4] Theatre of the Oppressed: Transitioning Feminist Theory to Praxis"

Review Level: Level II

Your IRB Proposal has been approved as of February 16, 2012. On behalf of the Minnesota State University, I wish you success with your study. Remember that you must seek approval for any changes in your study, its design, funding source, consent process, or any part of the study that may affect participants in the study. Should any of the participants in your study suffer a research-related injury or other harmful outcome, you are required to report them to the IRB as soon as possible.

The approval of your study is for one calendar year from the approval date. When you complete your data collection or should you discontinue your study, you must notify the IRB. Please include your log number with any correspondence with the IRB.

This approval is considered final when the full IRB approves the monthly decisions and active log. The IRB reserves the right to review each study as part of its continuing review process. Continuing reviews are usually scheduled. However, under some conditions the IRB may choose not to announce a continuing review. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [patricia.hargrove@mnsu.edu](mailto:patricia.hargrove@mnsu.edu) or 507-389-1415.

The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for maintaining consents in a secure location at MSU for 3 years. If the PI leaves MSU before the end of the 3-year timeline, he/she is responsible for following "Consent Form Maintenance" procedures posted online.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia Hargrove".

Patricia Hargrove, Ph.D.  
IRB Coordinator

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Hadley".

Mary Hadley, Ph.D.  
IRB Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Auger". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "R" and a trailing flourish.

Richard Auger, Ph.D.  
IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Minnesota State University's records.



## APPENDIX 5

## “When...” Playbill from Minnesota State University, Mankato 2012

**NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR**

I want to thank all of you from the bottom of my heart for attending “When...”. Preparing for this production is always a trying and exhilarating experience that I am honored to share with you. As a survivor of domestic abuse, I have dedicated my career in theatre to raising awareness for violence against women and have continued to expand the direction of “When...” to encompass more issues. In reading the statistics, I hope, you gain awareness of the undying problem that is affecting not only women, but also men, all over the world. I would like to thank first and foremost my amazing actors who have contributed their talents, time, and passion to this project. I would also like to thank the Women’s Center for sponsoring this event and George Grubb for sound design. Finally, I would like to dedicate this production to the survivors who have had the strength to persevere, and their friends and family who helped them/us find the strength to carry on. Together we can make a difference.

“When...” will you **Speak up**, **Get involved**, and find the courage to **Step in**?

Thank you,  
Megan Rae

For more information about the show or to contact me directly visit [www.whenproductions.org](http://www.whenproductions.org).

**STILL THINKING ABOUT “WHEN”**

“When...” explores difficult topics, which include relationship violence and sexual violence. This performance may have triggered emotions for you from an act or acts of violence that occurred recently or many years ago. If you would like to talk more, please know that you can meet with me, Laura Schultz, the Violence Awareness and Response Coordinator. I can provide you with emotional support, resources and tools to assist you in your healing process, and so much more. I am here for you. No one has to go through this alone. You can reach me by calling 507-389-5127, emailing [laura.schultz-1@mnsu.edu](mailto:laura.schultz-1@mnsu.edu), or stopping by the Women’s Center, which is located on the second floor of the Centennial Student Union (CSU 218) during our office hours, Monday-Friday, 8am-4:30pm. We are here for you.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Counseling Services: 507-389-1455  
[S] Hospital Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-865-0606  
[S] Mayo Hospital: 507-383-2620  
Crisis Connection: 1-866-379-6363  
Committee Against Domestic Abuse (CADA): 507-625-7233  
Campus Security: 507-389-2111

More Resources can be found at [whenproductions.org](http://whenproductions.org).

**“WHEN...”**

**DO YOU SPEAK UP?**

**DO YOU STEP IN?**

**DO YOU GET INVOLVED?**

2012

AN INTERACTIVE PLAY WRITTEN BY MEGAN RAE AND PERFORMED BY MSU STUDENTS ABOUT SEXUAL AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE.

**“WHEN...”**

Director/Author: Megan Rae  
Sponsored by: The MSU Women’s Center/Violence Awareness and Response Program

The pre-show music will pause every 30 seconds in representation of the statistic that every 15 to 30 seconds a woman in the United States is abused.

**EAST**

Melinda Brinkhaus, Sara Gage, Kayla Green,  
Deanna Knutsen, Serena Lynch, Nik Price,  
Mac Vagt, Zach Wight

**“WHEN DO YOU SPEAK UP?”**

Nearly 5.3 million domestic violence incidents occur each year among U.S. women ages 18 and older. This violence results in nearly 2 million injuries and nearly 1,300 deaths.  
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008)

One out of three women in the United States will experience violence in a romantic relationship.  
(The Commonwealth Fund Health National Survey of Domestic Violence: 1996 Survey of Women’s Health, May 1999)

As many as one in six males fall victim to sexual abuse by age 16.  
(Hoyet, J. Sexual abuse of male: Prevalence, possible lasting effects, and resources when adolescents. *Leaflet* 2007/05)

25% of LGBT relationships experience domestic abuse.  
(Barnes, B. Just a Queer. *American Bar Association Journal*, February 1996 p. 25)

All the scenarios used in the scenes are based on true experiences.

**“WHEN DO YOU GET INVOLVED?”**

As many as one in six males fall victim to sexual abuse by age 16.  
(Hoyet, J. Sexual abuse of male: Prevalence, possible lasting effects, and resources when adolescents. *Leaflet* 2007/05)

25% of LGBT relationships experience domestic abuse.  
(Barnes, B. Just a Queer. *American Bar Association Journal*, February 1996 p. 25)

95% of men who physically abuse their intimate partners also psychologically abuse them.  
(Herman, J. & Hirschman, L. (1981). *The Dynamics of Psychological Abuse*. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 43(1), 25-37.)

Young women ages 16 to 24 years are four times more likely to be sexually assaulted.  
(Rosen, D. (2004). *Women’s Violence against young women: Implications for research*. *Violence and Victims*, 19(1), 1-15.)

**“WHEN DO YOU STEP IN?”**

Special note: This scene is dedicated to a survivor who wished to share her experience in order to make change. Thank you for your search.

Every 96 seconds someone in the United States is sexually assaulted.  
(Rape Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), 2010)

71% of rapes are planned in advance.  
(DC Rape Crisis Center. Turning anger into change. Available at [www.dccr.org/](http://www.dccr.org/))

57% of rapes occur on dates.  
(Koss, M. (1987). *Sexual Assault: A National Study*. Retrieved August 15, 2008, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.aurora.edu/~sfs/sexual/>)

One in four women will be sexually assaulted on a college campus.  
(Hirsch, J. (1995). *National Violence Center*. Retrieved August 14, 2008, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.nvcc.org/index.html>)

60% of sexual assaults go unreported to law enforcement.  
(2007 National Crime Victimization Survey)

42% of college women survivors never tell anyone about their assault.  
(Wardlaw, Robin. (1998). *I never called it rape*. New York: Harper Perennial)



## APPENDIX 6

**Theatre of the Oppressed Vocabulary Reference Chart**

Bertolt Brecht	Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was a German playwright, director and dramaturge whose ideas have exercised enormous influence on contemporary Western theatre, perhaps principally in the population of anti-illusionistic staging methods. Most significant in terms of his impact on Boal are his theories of and experiments in epic theatre.
Cop in the Head	Term used by Boal to suggest that the restrictive forces inhibiting freedom of action can sometimes be inside our own heads rather than deriving from external oppressors.
Epic Theatre	Brecht's Epic Theatre is principally characterized by sociopolitical subject-matter, appeal to reason rather than emotion, and deliberate highlighting of the drama as foreknown as narrative as opposed to unfolding spontaneous action.
Forum Theatre	Theatre of the Oppressed method where a scene demonstrating an oppression is present by actors and then replayed with spontaneous interventions by audience members.
Image Theatre	Core techniques of Theatre of the Oppressed based around use of the body to express themes, emotions, and attitudes.
Invisible Theatre	Theatre of the Oppressed technique whereby a prepared scene or action addressing an important issue of social concern is played in a public context as if it were a real event.
Joker	A figure within Theatre of the Oppressed practices whose function is to mediate between actors and spectators and in all ways possible assist the latter's participation within the dramatic action.
Legislative Theatre	Legislative theatre aims to 'theatricalise politics' by establishing a direct line between Theatre of the Oppressed explorations at grass-root level and an

	actual law-making process.
Newspaper Theatre	Theatre of the Oppressed method using daily news items as basis for theatrical performance, in the process examining and exposing the 'mediation' of events by the newspapers themselves.
Praxis	Term used by Paulo Freire and others to refer to a model of thinking, learning and doing in which theory and practice are not discrete concepts but are recognized as interdependent and inseparable: theory is grounded in action, and action is theory embodied.
Rainbow of Desire	Umbrella term for the body of Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, developed by Boal. Used to explore issues that appear to be more individual/psychological in emphasis the social/political.
spect-actor	Boal's term for the spectator-turned-actor, the participatory role sought by Theatre of the Oppressed that involves both reflection and active intervention.
Konstantin Stanislavsky	Konstantin Stanislavsky (1863-1938) was a Russian actors, director, and teacher. Stanislavsky developed a system of training that required actors to draw on their personal experiences and emotions, as well as their imagination, in rehearsing a role.

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